**MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS AS
PROFESSIONALS, OR ARE THEY?**

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Management Consultants as Professionals, or Are They?

by

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Managers make great use of consultants, giving rise to a rapid annual growth rate of 15% in consulting industry revenues where we estimate that today there are over one million consultants and $200 billion revenue worldwide. High industry growth has a big negative "con" attached to it with a large influx of new consultants each year with problematic qualifications. Being a consultant is a very different role from being a manager---they have to be knowledgeable about different industries and effective at working with clients—a relationship that Maister calls the "trusted advisor" (2000). Most new consultants, like their seniors, learn on the job, thus fulfilling the old cliché of "learning at the expense of clients."

Managers, serving as clients, have every right to expect professional performance from their consultants, because bad recommendations and unethical conduct can cause a great deal of harm, as in the Enron case. Our concern and critical conclusion about the questionable knowledge and skills of today's consultants is based on our experience and research over the years as industry observers while serving on boards of consulting firms and associations, conducting research, writing books, articles and cases, teaching consulting courses—and even acting as consultants ourselves.

Over the years all the involved stakeholders (managers, consulting firms, business schools, professional associations, and public agencies) have tried to raise the level of professionalism among consultants. They have usually attempted to meet this challenge by articulating and communicating higher standards from those embedded in the consulting task.

But stating standards is not enough to make one into a professional---action is required to turn standards into reality.

In this article, we argue that there is clearly a long way to go to bring consultants and their consulting firms to a higher level of professionalism. We consider four challenges affecting progress toward professionalism: 1) What is the scope of the professional problem among consultants and stakeholders?; 2) What is meant by the term "professional"?; 3) What does the consulting task require in terms of skills and integrity to be professional?; and 4) What are the stakeholder groups currently doing to raise the level of professionalism? We conclude with a series of action steps for all parties to take in raising the future level of professionalism in the field of consulting. Much of the solution can be summed up by a combination of articulating and communicating standards better, enhancing consulting education in business schools, and achieving greater collaboration across stakeholders.

Scope of the Problem

Consultants Themselves

The eye of the beholder is critical here---consultants might out of self-interest argue there is no problem with their professional credentials. We disagree, there is still a big gap between what is required and the actual qualifications of consultants. Consulting is a popular career choice with MBAs, many of whom have been trained by business schools in the functional/technical disciplines tailored for managers, not as consultants to be. While these courses are helpful, many additional skills are required of consultants----about intervention, interviewing, change management, and building trust and influencing clients. Just about anyone these days can declare themselves to be a "management consultant"; and they can advertise themselves in the Yellow Pages as a "business consultant". It has also become a popular "current

job title" on the resumes of unemployed executives, who want potential hires to think of them as performing "professional" work capturing off their past experience as executives. We are also acquainted with many independent consultants who have no formal training in consulting. Most management consultants don't belong to any professional organization concerned with improving the quality of consulting.

Shortfall among Stakeholders

Support given by stakeholders has been mixed and spotty with little cooperation between stakeholders. They have usually tried to meet the professional challenge by articulating and communicating standards they see as embedded in the consulting task and its effects on client performance. There are few courses on management consulting in business schools. High turnover in the large consulting firms—almost 90% of new hires are gone in the first ten years before partner selection—which means a whole new crew to hire and train each year. Consulting firms also have a conflict of interest between using untrained consultants on projects to preserve the leverage factor in profits. Clients are not especially sophisticated in selecting among various types of consultants who to them all look alike and promise good results. Professional associations seem to be looking out for their own interests, not reaching out to the other stakeholders for joint solutions. As a consequence, unwanted public regulation is making headway in the E.U. but not in the U.S.

At least three books have been written and well-documented on the transgressions of consulting firms: (Dangerous Company: Management Consultants and the Businesses They Save and Ruin, (O'Shea and Madigan, 1998); Consulting Demons: Inside the world of Global corporate Consulting, (Pinault, 2001); House of Lies: How Management Consultants Steal Your

Watch and Then Tell You the Time, (Kihn, 2005). In its review of the O'Shea and Madigan book, the Economist writes:

> "Management consultants are at work at every level of the corporate world, from small family companies to Fortune 5000 giants, in the uppermost levels of government and in the emerging markets of the international economy. They promise results, but what kind of practices are employed to achieve them: In this riveting, provocative examination of the business of management consulting, two award-winning journalists narrate the behind-the-scenes tales of some of the most disastrous and expensive consulting engagements in the industry---and draw some invaluable lessons."

As a result, there is an expanding gap between consulting as a profession and the professional quality of the consulting population.

What is the Meaning of Professional?

Consulting is indeed a profession because, like physicians, attorneys and others, the task requires specialized knowledge to provide advice and recommendations that affect not only the firm's performance but the lives and careers of many employees. If consulting is indeed a profession that doesn't mean to us that consultants will behave in a professional manner with the required skills and ethics. As one client told us in our research:

> "I've had consultants who behaved very inappropriately and didn't give me a creative solution. They revealed information told to them in confidence, and their solutions weren't very original—just repeating what we told them."

In 2006, Christopher McKenna published a history of management consulting under the title "The World's Newest Profession: Management Consulting in the Twentieth Century". He contended that, despite its rapid growth, it may not yet be a recognized profession. We agree-----

even if consulting is a profession simply because someone who performs it does not make them a "professional."

If consultants are to be defined as professionals, we draw on various definitions of professionals to determine their underlying characteristics. We have underlined the key recurring words from a number of sources:

- **Websters Dictionary**: "Of or pertaining to a profession, or calling; conforming to the rules or standards of a profession; following a profession; as professional knowledge; professional conduct."

- **Wikepedia**: "A person who practices an occupation involving high standards of intellectual knowledge after successfully completing the required education and training."

- **Roget's Thesaurus** "Having or demonstrating a high degree of knowledge or skill: adept, crack, expert, master, masterful, masterly, proficient, skilled, skillful."

- **Lectric Law Library** – "A professional is any employee engaged in work predominantly intellectual and varied in character as opposed to routine mental, manual, mechanical, or physical work; involving the consistent exercise of discretion and judgment in its performance;…requiring knowledge of an advanced type in a field of science or learning customarily acquired by a prolonged course of specialized intellectual instruction and study in an institution of higher learning."

The pattern of underlined words that characterize professionals in the above definitions can be summarized as follows:

1) **High Standards of Excellence** – which apply to training and conduct, usually set and requiring conformity across those who practice the profession.
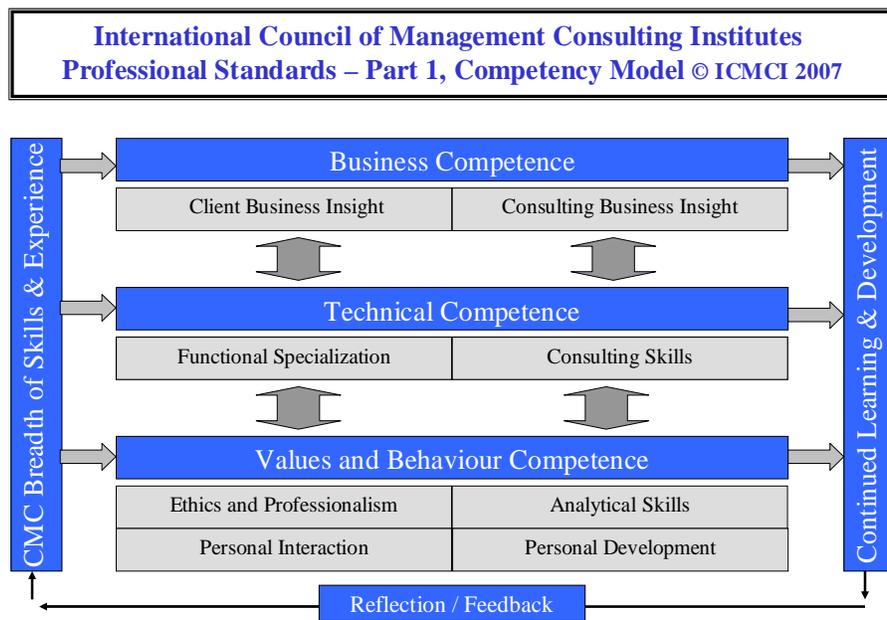
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2) **Advanced Knowledge and Skill**– Intellectual work of a specialized kind that allows one to be classified as an "expert", who practices the application of judgment in non-routine work.

3) **Required Education and Training** - Usually acquired through institutions of higher learning providing an advanced type of knowledge and skill-building.

These characteristics all suggest that standards are necessarily pre-defined and tested to qualify one as a professional. Most professionals, such as lawyers, doctors and nurses, psychologists, architects, and professors are already subject to requirements articulated and enforced by either public or private institutions. There is also an advanced body of knowledge that has to acquired and mastered through advanced training. The work is non-routine and requires the exercise of judgment. Requirements imply control and certification to assure universal application.

How do most consultants measure up on these requirements? The twin requirements for "high standards of intellectual knowledge" along with "required education and training" leave a great deal of room for interpretation and even debate. In contrast to the other helping professions (doctors, lawyers, and teachers) that are institutionalized with tests and certification, there is an absence of testing and public regulation for management consultants, though it may be coming in Europe. Business schools, the source of most consultants, are in the business of training executives, not consultants. Only a minority of consultants belong to a professional consulting association, and even fewer who have been certified (only 10,000 in the world have the CMC-- Certified Management Consultant, which is less than 1% out of over one million consultants worldwide). IBM and Accenture each have over 100,000 employees, and most of their consultants are not certified as CMCs.

Task Requirements for Consultants

One must analyze the consulting task to set standards and skill requirements, which later will form the basis of education and certification. In addition, the nature of the consulting task, including its inevitable challenges, comprises the foundation of a body of knowledge for consulting. A comprehensive list of the required skills that one might expect is defined by ICMCI (International Council of Management Consulting Institutes), the only accrediting granting body. Appendix A elaborates the specific skills that go into making up three broad categories—Business Competence, Technical Competence, and Values and Behavior Competence. ICMCI views management consulting as a profession that meets certain requirements pertaining to character, qualifications, experience, independence and competence, as defined by this competence framework:

International Council of Management Consulting Institutes
Professional Standards – Part 1, Competency Model © ICMCI 2007

CMC Breadth of Skills & Experience			Continued Learning & Development
	Business Competence		
	Client Business Insight	Consulting Business Insight	
	Technical Competence		
	Functional Specialization	Consulting Skills	
	Values and Behaviour Competence		
	Ethics and Professionalism	Analytical Skills	
	Personal Interaction	Personal Development	
	Reflection / Feedback		

Glen, Maister and Bennis, in their book, Leading Geeks (2003), list, among others, several specific competencies needed by the consulting professional, not all of which are mentioned in ICMCI's definition of required skills:

- "Ability to manage client relationships

- Ability to manage technical teams

- Ability to play positive politics

- Ability to help expand client relationships

- Ability to work through others and make them productive

- Ability to manage ambiguity

- Ability to manage time horizons

- Ability to manage client relationships"

Like all professional work, management consulting is conducted in the context of a helping relationship with clients. One expert on consulting, David Maister, in his book The Trusted Advisor (2000) argues that professional consultants should become "trusted advisors" with all the skills that lead to this outcome. Maister (2001) lists these skills that "most consultants wish they had mastered earlier in their careers". Maister views these skills as "learnable and some even teachable"; all are components of what Maister contends is a "fully-skilled professional".

- "How to earn other people's trust and confidence

- How to earn, deserve and thereby nurture a relationship with a client

- How to give advice without being assertive or patronizing

- How to deal with conflicts among client personnel

- How to manage meetings

- How to supervise others so they want to work for you again

- How to get the best out of those in support or administrative roles

- How to get someone in a more senior role to want to help you

- How to receive work delegated to you so you know what you're supposed to be doing

- If, when and how to say "no" to a senior person or client

- Getting feedback from others, inside and outside, in a timely form you can use "

All of these competence models in the management consulting contain a mix and wide breadth of technical and change management knowledge, skills and attitudes. We can add to these a list of more concrete skills like proposal writing, interviewing, data gathering, making presentations, marketing of consulting, and understanding the management practices and economics of the consulting industry. In addition to these, we have made a survey of books on management consulting (   ), which reveals considerable overlap with the above skills—all of which can provide a good foundation for future educational courses on consulting in business schools and training programs in consulting firms.

The Integrity Issue

High standards of integrity and ethics are widely viewed at the core of professionalism in consulting. While consulting is intended to produce good performance results for the client, it can also range from failure to correct problems to no return on a client's investment in fees. Integrity is important because of dependence by the client on the consultant, a relationship that makes the client vulnerable to misconduct by the consultant. This asymmetry opens clients to many of the same abuses that have plagued other helping professions, such as in the doctor/patient relationship. Unfortunately, clients sometimes reverse the process by taking advantage of consultants for the purpose of the consultants producing agreement with them on problems and solutions.

Clients expect a good return from their consultants, but many projects fall short, costing millions of dollars and even the careers of employees. The Enron case is a good example: the Andersen office in Houston placed their own profits above raising concerns about the client's accounting and financial practices. Enron went into bankruptcy, and thousands of people lost their jobs and pensions at both firms. Most of the lawsuits against consultants have occurred with IT consulting firms around ineffective information systems—signs of failure in systems appear evident which can be readily assigned to consultants. Those consulting firms with more general management practices argue that it is hard to prove that their consulting was responsible because failure may be due to the client's manager's lack of effective implementation. As one partner told us:

> "We've never been sued for providing bad results because clients realize they may be at fault too."

What, precisely, does integrity mean? Most definitions suggest that consultants have to be honest, objective and not hype their credentials. Key provisions of the ICMCI ethical code does this, requiring CMCs to adhere to a "Code of Professional Conduct" covering a comprehensive list of ethical principals:

- **Confidentiality** - A member will treat client information as confidential and will neither take personal advantage of privileged information gathered during an assignment, nor enable others to do so.

- **Unrealistic Expectations** - A member will refrain from encouraging unrealistic expectations or promising clients that benefits are certain from specific management consulting services.

- **Commissions / Financial Interests** - A member will neither accept commissions, remuneration, nor other benefits from a third party in connection with recommendations

to a client without the client's knowledge and consent, nor fail to disclose any financial interest in goods or services which form part of such recommendations.

- **Assignments** - A member will accept only assignments which the member has the skills and knowledge to perform.

- **Conflicting Assignments** - A member will avoid acting simultaneously in potentially conflicting situations without informing all parties in advance that this is intended.

- **Conferring with Client** - A member will ensure that before accepting any engagement, a mutual understanding of the objectives, scope, work plan, and fee arrangements has been established, and that any personal, financial, or other interest which might influence the conduct of the work has been disclosed.

- **Recruiting** - A member will refrain from inviting an employee of a client to consider alternative employment without prior discussion with the client.

- **Approach** - A member will maintain a fully professional approach in all dealings with clients, the general public, and fellow members.

- **Other Management Consultants** -A member will ensure that other management consultants carrying out work on behalf of the member are conversant with and abide by this Code of Professional Conduct.

The Academy of Management's Consulting Division proposes a less detailed but similar ethical code for consultants, whether they be an academic or member of a firm:

"It is the duty of consultants to represent their credentials and capabilities in an accurate and objective manner. Consultants shall accept only those assignments for which they have appropriate expertise. Consultants shall refrain from exaggerating their professional qualifications to secure prospective assignments. Consultants shall examine any factors

(e.g. prior experience, capabilities, and other commitments) that might limit their

judgment or objectivity in carrying out an assignment."

Clients have told us that certain of these canons are often violated, especially in

overstating what they can accomplish and also leaving the client out of the loop until a study is

completed. Competition and marketing pressures seem to enhance the degree of "hype" in most

proposals. Consultants tend to give very controlled interim feedback instead of negotiating an

open relationship where both client and consultant work together in a collaborative manner from

the outset. Argyris (2000) argues for "free and informed choice" with clients in consultant

behavior, which can remove some of the dependence on the client's part. Clients have much to

add to a consulting project from the beginning and collaborate throughout the process, not sit and

wait for the consultant's final analysis and recommendations.

Many consulting firms have ethical codes, yet one wonders if they monitor, train and

enforce their codes of conduct—only future research can provide the answer from looking at a

number of firms. Below is a list of ethical statements taken from the website of an actual

consulting firm---unlike most statements that may strike readers as another set of empty

platitudes, it is written with "teeth" in it for violations. Note they guarantee their consulting

product, will turn down unnecessary work, will walk await from uncivil clients, and will fire any

violators of their ethical code:

- "We stand by our work. <u>If clients don't like our work, we refuse to take their money</u>.

- We always put the clients' interests first, ahead of our own.

- If a client wants to pay us to do things that we think aren't in his or her best interests, <u>we'll turn the work down</u>.

- If we have even the smallest doubt that we can't do this work to excellence, <u>we'll turn the work away.</u>

- We never lie, misrepresent or exaggerate, in any way, to anyone, under any circumstances.

- If a client treats our people badly, or with a lack of respect, <u>we'll walk away from that client.</u>

- We <u>will fire any employee</u> who fails to treat others (at any level) with respect and dignity"

Responsibility falls on every consulting firm to establish an ethical context for its consultant employees. Simply stating ethical standards can't end with the written word on a website; the proof is in the selection, training and monitoring of consultant behavior. Maister (1997) highlights "character" and "attitude" as signs of professionalism, but he doesn't believe these can be taught, so they become key hiring criteria. Even if it is the right hire, that person can be compromised under firm profit pressures. Ethical conduct must also go beyond the consulting firm to include all the major stakeholders who can and must play a role in training for, setting quality standards, and monitoring results.

<div align="center">**Assessing the Key Stakeholders**</div>

To be sure, the field of consulting has come a long way toward professionalism, especially with the support of its major stakeholders (managerial clients, consulting firms, business schools, professional associations, and public agencies). Numerous books and journal articles have been written to form a body of knowledge about consulting. Business schools have initiated new consulting courses. Professional associations have set standards and taken steps to

certify consultants. Consulting firms, especially the large brand names, have become more rigorous in their hiring and training. Informative websites have been developed by firms, including Kennedy Information that is a fee based site with a wealth of information on it. Experienced clients have also grown more sophisticated in selecting consultants.

Despite this progress, we believe that the continued and combined efforts of all stakeholders are required to raise the level of quality across the consultant population. Marvin Bower, the founder of McKinsey, once contended that simply being hired by McKinsey was sufficient qualification to be a professional consultant. The problem is that all firms are not McKinsey, with a majority of consultants working on their own as independents, as well as those in small and large firms where they left to learn "on the job". We need to examine how various stakeholders operate today to assure or not assure that consultants are "truly professional".

Clients, Markets and Public Regulation

Some might contend that an efficient market and competition among consulting firms will sort out the quality problem, causing low quality firms to disappear over time. However, the consulting market is not very efficient; causality between what the consultants do and the client's contribution is extremely hard to decipher because of the subjective nature of consulting with so many variables operating. Hence, bad consultants live to consult again.

Many clients often don't know what they are getting when engaging a consulting firm. They frequently don't probe deep enough, and end up having little say over who is assigned by name and experience to their project or how the project is conducted in its approach. An earlier research article by Nees et al (1985) gave a forewarning in its title, "Seeing Behind the Look Alike Consultants", which, according to the authors, a lot of their proposal's wording and promises are the same. Furthermore, they contend consultants dress alike and talk alike, all

wanting to solve the client's problem. But then they point out that after a consulting firm is hired, differences in approach and solutions emerge as a mirror of a consulting firm's culture---some firms emphasize numbers, some are qualitatively focused, some look mainly at economics, and others focus on organizations and leadership behavior. Several clients told us in words resembling this quote from one of them:

> "On one project, I got a bunch of young MBAs assigned to work on my organization structure. I thought the senior partner would be there full time but he just showed up now and then to oversee feedback. Their approach was to interview a lot of my senior executives who felt like they were educating the consultants. The fee didn't represent the value of the results."

Others might leave regulation up to public institutions, as in many professions such as health and legal, where they set and enforce standards. This is already beginning to happen in Europe with the E.U. and the Lisbon Accord and the issue of a Draft Services directive where they intend to establish a "borderless" market for goods and services in the E.U. As part of this programme, CEN (the European standards Body covering the EU and EFTA countries) has decided to establish a set of "service standards" for the nominated services, which includes management consulting since it is the least well entrenched of the professions. Management consulting is widely seen in the E.U. as the first professional service for which standards will be drafted.

While it might be useful for public regulators to set standards, there is always the slippery slope toward stifling regulation and enforcement. We doubt Europe's coming regulation will stand much of a chance of happening in the U.S., unless there are more fiascos like Enron. So, in our opinion, it is up to business schools, consulting firms, and professional associations to act in

a move toward self-regulation, which will only work if these groups are mature and active. If this is to happen, there are some real challenges to address.

Business Schools

High hiring hurdles are necessary but not sufficient if one takes seriously the need for a candidate to possess consulting knowledge and acquired skills. Many consulting firms pursue MBAs and undergrads for entering positions because they regard that education as sufficient qualification. But we question this assumption because MBA training is mostly oriented to technical skills for managers, and while useful to consultants it is not specialized training in being a consultant.

Many top business schools continue to brag about the high pay awarded by consulting firms to their graduates—often the highest pay on their list of hiring companies. But are these recent recruits really qualified? We have our doubts. From talking with various firms about their recruiting criteria, they usually go only to leading schools, look for top grades, a friendly personality, and a technical specialty in finance or marketing. Most of these assessments are highly qualitative, but a few like McKinsey are more rigorous, using multiple interviews and psychological tests as a first screen. Several use a case approach to screen potential recruits, asking them to analyze a case and talk about it with their consultants.

Most business schools still retain the same curriculum from years past organized around the functional disciplines taught by professors who aren't consultants--MBA students typically receive a broad introduction to the business disciplines in their first year core, and pursue a second year concentration in finance or marketing. Several business schools offer "industry concentrations", such as real estate and investment banking, but not consulting. After making a

survey of top 10 schools, we count only the Johnson School at Cornell as offering a balanced

concentration below covering the necessary disciplines while including a sufficient number of

consulting courses and projects:

- Managerial Cost Accounting
- Management Consulting
- Cases in Business Strategy
- Management Consulting Projects
- Cases in Consulting Focus
- Marketing Strategy

David Maister (2001) is a big critic of business schools in their failure to prepare

consultants with the necessary behavioral skills for careers in consulting.

"A business-school education does little to help students distinguish between the

"consultant as expert" (I can solve your problem) and consultant as helpful advisor (I can

facilitate your decision-making process, and help you make your decisions). Without the

ability to earn a client's trust, clients will not listen to content expertise.

Few consultants report that they have been trained in these human interactive

skills. Their entire education in schools and in firms has been about logic,

rationality, and intellect; little, if any, experiential learning was provided to

them on how to earn trust, win influence, and establish relationships.

According to Maister, many consultants express some negative and seemingly arrogant

behavioral traits acquired through their business school education. He reports clients talking

about their experience with several MBA consultants whom they criticize for the following

qualities:

- "Don't listen

- Treat me like a job, not a person

- Don't explain what they're doing and why

- Don't like to be asked questions or challenged

- Leave me out of the loop and take over my issue

- Tell me what they think I must do, instead of giving me options

- Are more interested in my money than me

- Ignore my feelings and treat the issues as purely technical

- Apply standard solutions and approaches; don't make me feel as if they are customizing to my needs

- Don't act as if they care about me"

Most MBAs hired by consulting firms have not taken a course designed to acquaint them with the requirements and skills embedded in the management consulting task---only 34 business schools out of the top 50 schools (BW rankings) offer a course on management consulting---only 15 of these 34 offer multiple courses in consulting—all of which are electives to be taken voluntarily (2007 survey by Profs. S. Adams of Bentley College and A. Zanzi of Suffolk U.). Many of the existing consulting courses are quite specialized in their content, such as a focus on the marketing of services or intervention strategies instead of a broad introduction.

Schools need to draw on the existing body of knowledge to offer a broad-based consulting course, which many top schools do not have, including Harvard and Stanford, who are big sources of consultant hiring. There should also be some introduction to consulting in the first year required core, where interested students learn about the required skills and courses that will prepare them. Books, articles and cases have been written about consulting as a legitimate substantive field (see references).

What should a comprehensive course on general management consulting look like? Appendix C represents an outline that covers a wide range of topics ranging from required skills, marketing of consulting, data-gathering, likely projects to be encountered, interventions/change management, and the consulting industry, along with management issues in consulting firms A field consulting project is essential so students can practice their skills and see what an actual engagement is like. There they learn about defining the problem, gathering data and analyzing/synthesizing their results into a persuasive set of recommendations to the client who must sign off and give feedback to the students. Also, occasional guest consultant speakers talking about their experience with the topic at hand in the course.

Consulting Firms

Most consultants, like managers, learn on the job. Consulting firms, operating in the background, currently serve as the sole selector, regulator, educator and monitor of consultant behavior. This places a heavy responsibility and cost on consulting firms to select, train and monitor the performance of their consultants. Firms try to select carefully and can eventually remove the low performers, yet it may be too late as damage may have been caused and clients lost, as in the Enron case. The pay leverage formula in both big and small consulting firms causes lower paid and relatively inexperienced consultants to be placed on projects. This supports the validity of the old cliché about "junior consultants learning at the expense of the client".

Appendix B shows the results of a 2004 survey of the types of training conducted by consulting firms. Most of this training is largely technical, advocating a firm's particular approach to its consulting projects. There are singular exceptions with "blue chip" firms such as McKinsey, which makes heavy investments in selection and training; the firm recruits and

selects consultants based on multiple interviews with testing and case problem-solving. McKinsey also conducts formal training programs on "influence skills" taught by psychologists, and follows a common practice of reinforcing this learning by inviting second and third consultants to sit in on client meetings to observe and debrief the interactions. Other leading firms have "universities", including Monitor, CapGemeni, and Bain with a virtual university. Both McKinsey and Booz-Allen publish interesting journals regularly, containing new knowledge from surveys and a focus on issues encountered in their consulting experience.

The above "blue chip" firms set a good example, which smaller firms don't have the capital to follow. They are constrained by costs of training and limits on their time that takes them away from selling and consulting work. Independent consultants without a firm must initiate their own programs of career development and professionalization.

Professional Associations

Two important professional associations are also involved stakeholders, ICMCI (International Council of Management Consulting Institutes) with units in 44 countries, and the Academy of Management consulting division with 1400 members worldwide who teach, research and practice consulting. There is also the Organization Development Network with thousands of members, most of whom are internal consultants. While this article is concerned with management consultants, much of its conclusions and implications can be applied to internal consultants.

Today the leading and only association for accredited consulting is ICMCI (International Council of Management Consulting Institutes), founded in 1987 and headquartered in the Netherlands, which is the umbrella organisation worldwide for 44 professional institutes. Each country has a consulting association that sponsors certification and training programs for

consultants. In the U.S. its institute is IMC USA (Institute of Management Consultants), which is a highly active organization with an informative website, providing several services to its members, including certification assessment for CMC applicants.

The mission of ICMCI is to: "a) increase the acceptance of management consulting as a respected profession, b) raise standards of the profession of management consultants by creating the Certified Management Consultant (CMC) designation as the international benchmark for individual management consultants and support its development throughout the world, c) ensure adherence to an International Code of Conduct and a Common Body of Knowledge (CBK), and d) encourage networking of management consultants across national boundaries."

The country members of ICMCI conduct a rigorous qualification process leading to a CMC. The "Certified Management Consultant (CMC), is a management consultant who meets certain requirements pertaining to character, qualifications, experience, independence and competence as defined by the CMC competency framework."

- Have approximately three years experience as a consultant;
- Are experienced in all elements of the consulting life cycle;
- Can take full ownership for delivery of a project or a major work stream;
- Have experience in managing others; and
- Whose contribution is highly valued by clients.

Each assessment is carried out by experienced, accredited assessors. The assessment tools are written evidence of formal qualifications, as well as structured interviews with qualified assessors who evaluate the level of competence of each CMC applicant.

In addition, ICMCI provides its ACP (Accredited Consulting Practice) program that allows and authorizes a consulting firm to propose CMC candidates who can be "confidently accepted with minimum scrutiny" in meeting the standards of the national certification bodies. ICMCI accredits the firm beforehand so that it has in place the professional processes, standards, and commitment to assess its consultants. To date, about 35 firms, all in Europe, have become certified as ACPs, including IBM, PwC, Atos, and PA Consulting in the UK. According to ICMCI, this ACP qualification offers several benefits to the consulting firm and its individual consultants, ranging from expedited CMC certification of individuals and assurance to prospective clients that it indeed adheres to professional standards. The ACP gets around the issues of leaving it up to individuals to initiate and the time consuming procedural process.

Unfortunately, the market penetration of ICMCI is quite limited in the U.S. with only about 1000 CMCs and no ACPs. The U.S. CMC population is composed largely of consultants who are independents and employed by small firms—a serious handicap with no big firm representation. Membership and certification is more significant in Europe—its list of ACP firms is concentrated mainly in the UK with over 30 medium to large sized firms approved there—a success that should be studied and emulated in the U.S.

Academic Associations

A major division of the Academy of Management is the Management Consulting Division, with over 1400 members from around the world. It is comprised mostly of professors from universities, but close to 30% are practitioners. Its stated purpose is to "advance knowledge and understanding of management consulting and to aid in the development of consultants from the perspectives of research, practice and teaching". The Division has a dual focus on producing knowledge production about the process of consulting and the consulting industry. Each year the

members convene at the Academy's annual meeting where they sponsor workshops, paper presentations and symposia, all accepted after a careful review process. These sessions address such topics as ethical issues in consulting, roles and responsibilities of academics in the field, the management of consulting firms, the consulting process, the marketing of consulting services, and the expanding role of consultants in organizations and society.

Several members of the consulting division have done research and published books and articles on the topics listed above. One of its active members and former Chair of the Division, Professor Anthony Buono, edits an annual series titled Research in Management Consulting (the past volumes are listed in the References to this paper). Many members have also served as consultants, and write and talk from first-hand experience. One obstacle faced by members is their limited access and contact with consulting firms to observe and perform research; more needs to be done to further cooperation. Little cooperation exists across stakeholders to raise the level of professionalism, each goes their way. An exception occurred at last year's annual Academy meeting, attended by representatives from ICMCI and IMC to discuss further cooperation, and is expected this year again.

Next Steps

If consulting as an industry is to advance into the professions like medicine and law, it needs to raise the level of education, cooperation among stakeholders and communication with consulting firms. We need to move beyond the contention that by simply working as a consultant for a reputable firm will qualify that person as a professional with most of the required skills and attitudes. We offer some suggestions here as a means to move closer to assuring that many more consultants will in the future measure up to being "truly professional".

First, individual consultants themselves need to take responsibility for improving their own personal skills through additional training and ultimately certification, steps that go beyond learning on the job. They can't be satisfied with only having an MBA degree. They need to solicit feedback from their bosses and mentors to identify their shortcomings, and then make up a tailor-made plan to correct them. They also need to join an association, such as the Consulting Division of the Academy of Management, where they can contribute and learn from sessions.

Second, we urge business schools to include more courses on management consulting in their curricula, as well as adding a concentration in consulting. As noted previously, only a few now are doing so. For MBA and undergrad students to simply take functional courses does not make them a consultant. There is more knowledge and skills to be acquired so as to improve one's consulting expertise. Every school should have at least a broad consulting course with a range of topics, plus more specialized courses such as intervention strategies. The concentrations should require a base course covering the fundamentals of consulting, and also seek to add a number of related courses, such as intervention and change management and power and influence. Consultant speakers should play a major role in these courses.

Third, the Consulting Division of the Academy of Management should make a major effort to encourage and train faculty to sponsor and teach consulting courses and to become leaders of a consulting emphasis in their schools. Sessions at the annual conference can offer workshops on course design and teaching at its annual conference. These sessions should be taught by those who have succeeded with courses and concentrations in their own schools, supplying examples of strategies and materials for doing so.

Fourth, the sole accrediting association, ICMCI, should take several actions: a) for CMC accreditation they should add a sixth requirement to their current five criteria ---that all those nominated for CMC status should have taken courses in consulting before application, including general and specialized courses. These courses can be conducted by consulting firms, associations and business schools. The curriculum for these courses should be submitted with each application for CMC; b) ICMCI should examine first why they have fallen short on membership across such a large geographic expanse (only 1% of the total consulting population) and why so much is located in Europe—is it because their assessment criteria are too burdensome or that consultants and their firms simply don't think they need accreditation?; c) since many clients are not aware of ICMCI they to acquaint them through increased advertising emphasizing for clients to prefer consulting firms and consultants with the CMC designation; d) ICMCI should pursue the APC process, especially in the U.S and with large well-known firms-- this effort will improve a firm's ability to nominate consultants for the CMC, which according to ICMCI "can be confidently accepted with minimum scrutiny". It will increase membership beyond solo independents and small firms in the U.S. APC success in the UK should be studied and duplicated in the U.S. by IMC USA. A special effort should be made to engage the leaders of major firms to obtain their cooperation. When brand name firms join APC, other firms are likely to follow. Strength is in the numbers and reputations of members.

Fifth, clients need to become more circumspect and sophisticated in the hiring of consultants. To help in this quest, there are many articles available on choosing a consultant. Start with a careful identification of the problem to be addressed and the preferred approach to be taken by the consultants. Next, ask several firms to bid. Third, hold systematic interviews with each prospect—ask how they go about their work and in what ways will they involve the client?

Also, clients should go beyond consultant references in search of any problems in their past record of engagements. Clients need to resist the temptation to except automatically a colleague's recommendation of consultant friend.

Sixth, we recommend more research on what consulting firms are doing to train and develop their consultants. Very little research has been conducted on consultant effectiveness, mainly because the consulting firms resist having a researcher along on a project because it is intrusive. They are also reticent because the research results may prove "no effect", thus hurting the reputation of the firm. In addition, evaluative research needs to be done to ascertain the results of consulting efforts. The professional associations should sponsor this research and allow scientifically trained researchers to gain access to member firms, which to researchers is more important than financial support for their projects. Anonymity can be preserved through the use of disguised names and relying on large samples to yield findings that eventually will become "best practices". Researchers should also tap the knowledge of consultants who are often out front of academics in confronting key issues facing organizations. More teaching cases where consultants are involved should be researched and written. Only one casebook on consultants has been published (2005). Consultants should join with academics in this research and jointly author publications with the scholars.

Future Stakeholder Synergy

It will take all of the stakeholders cooperating together to raise the standards and put the quality house in order. Currently, each institution is trying to serve its own institutional interests, which often blocks collaboration. But they need to draw off their individual strengths to contribute and cooperate with each other. Their common interest in improving quality can bring

them together—each has something to add to make the puzzle whole, with benefits for everyone. One step is to add and exchange board members to further mutual understanding and new action steps to improve professionalism. The Academy of Management should invite more speakers from consulting firms to participate in its program. Consulting firms can work with business schools to offer more consulting courses, and participate in them by teaching or speaking. The standardization efforts of ICMCI can assure that clients will receive more value. And these firms should publicize that they want their potential interviewees to have taken such courses. Academics can invite consultant speakers to class. Consulting firms can invite academic researchers in to their client projects to observe and study how they work and the outcomes.

The professional associations, the consulting firms and business schools must step forward and begin solutions, as suggested above. Their efforts will not only head off creeping bureaucratic public regulation but improve the level of professionalism industry-wide. Efforts to cooperate will necessarily require some leadership, compromises and changes within these institutions. We look forward to the day when a large majority of consultants can consider themselves as "truly professional."

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Appendix A – ICMCI Standards

International Council of Management Consulting Institutes (ICMCI) Professional standards – Part 2 Competencies and definitions © ICMCI 2007			
Major	**Sub set**	**High level components**	**Core component of assessability - defini**
Business Competence	Client Business Insight	Understanding the client	Has researched and understood client business ope agenda.
		Client business knowledge	Understands client business structures, processes, r and disciplines and impact on own area of work.
		External awareness	Demonstrates understanding of political, economic technological, legal and environmental factors (PE: impacting on area of work.
	Consulting Business Insight	Consultancy business knowledge	Understands the nature of the management consulta market, competitors and capabilities.
		Commercial aspects of assignments	Demonstrates understanding of commercial aspects including scope, risk, terms and conditions and pri
Technical Competence	Functional Specialization	Knowledge and skills	Recognised as an expert in own discipline, applyin in one or more industry sectors.
	Consulting Skills	Client focus	Scopes client requirements, presenting clear compr proposals. Identifies and articulates project drivers, and commercial benefits with client in respect of o individual projects. Understand client cultures, add satisfaction; understand client motivation impacts.
		Project management	Manages client projects effectively- setting objectiv deadlines and budgets, using appropriate project m tools and methodologies and ensuring seamless wit process.
		Consulting knowledge	Captures, shares and applies knowledge in a structu relevant to the engagement needs.
		Consultative process	Uses a range of techniques, including facilitation, t solutions of mutual benefit.

Values and Behaviour Competence	Ethics and Professionalism	Values, ethics & professionalism	Adheres to code of conduct and ethical guidelines. Demonstrates professional integrity, consistency, transparency, accountability, responsibility and reliability.
	Analytical Skills	Conceptualisation & problem solving	Employs structured approaches to generate ideas, evaluate and select options.
		Observations & analysis	Recommendations are supported by objective facts and research.
	Personal Interaction	Complexity, change & diversity	Understands complexity of operating environment and impact of selected course of actions on others.
		Communication & presentation	Uses a range of techniques and approaches to convey thoughts and ideas in a range of situations.
		Responsibility & accountability	Responsible for own actions, demonstrating resilience, drive and commitment to results.
		Influencing	Presents ideas convincingly to produce specific outcomes.
	Personal Development	Focus and time management	Delivers timely solutions, balancing priorities and managing time effectively.
		Self development	Proven track record of self development and personal growth. Proven ability to learn from past assignments and apply knowledge.

Appendix B
Training Mentioned by Top Consulting Firms from Website Survey*

*Top firms identified from *Consulting News* (2003), Website survey conducted April 2004 by Susan Adams and Alberto Zanzi

Firm Name	Training for Firm Consultants	URL for more info
Abt Associates Inc.	Tuition Assistance	http://abtassoc.com/Page.cfm?PageID=14300&FamilyID=14000
Accenture	First 5 years - extensive and focused training covering business acumen, technical, managerial and professional skills development. Specialized courses at every level for an employee to change career paths and/or advance to the next level. Special intranet for web based learning. Also access to corporate encyclopedia.	http://careers3.accenture.com/Careers/Global/CareerOptions/Consulting/Consulting_Train.htm
Answerthink	Answerthink University, Orientation, online training and professional development resources	http://www.answerthink.com/careers/training_development.asp
Aon Consulting	Tuition reimbursement, Aon University - School of Business, School of sales, School of Risk and Consulting, School of Technology	http://www.aon.com/us/about/careers/work_at_aon/career.jsp
Atos Origin	Atos Origin University & Atos Origin Gold Program	http://www.atosorigin.com/corporate/careers/learn.htm#
Bain & Company	Informal on-the-job training, Bain Virtual University offers formal online training	http://www.bain.com/bainweb/Join_Bain/training.asp
BDO Seidman	In-house continuing professional education courses, tuition reimbursement	http://www.bdo.com/careers/benefits/index.asp
Booz Allen Hamilton	Coaching & mentoring, cross-team assignments, immersion programs, membership in professional associations, tuition assistance, targeted courses in consulting, management and business development	http://www.boozallen.com/bahng/SilverDemo?PID=Home.html&dispType=HTML&contType=TABLE&FORM_ACTION=DISPLAY&SubTax3=4&NGPgID=careers&Taxonomy2=169767&Taxonomy3=178032
Boston Consulting Group	Orientation training, Business knowledge immersion	http://www.bcg.com/careers/bcg_experience/bcg_experience_learn_training.jsp
CACI	Tuition reimbursement	http://www.caci.com/job/benefit.shtml
Cap Gemini Ernst & Young	CapGemini University outside Paris offers team development programs and is also a Business School offering a 9month program. Access to Knowledge Base (K!New)	http://www.cgey.com/career/graduates/university.shtml; http://www.cgey.com/career/graduates/galaxy.shtml
CGI Group	On-the-job learning, CGI's Leadership Institute	http://www.cgi.com/web/en/careers/continuous_learning.htm
Ciber	Tuition assistance, CIBER University - online training	http://www.ciber.com/jobs/
Corporate Executive Board	Tuition Assistance	http://www.executiveboard.com/EXBD/1,2735,0-0-Public_Display-1802,FF.asp
Covansys	Tuition Assistance	http://www.covansys.com/careers/benefits.htm
CSC	Online courses (Learn @ CSC), technology certifications, instructor-led classes, special assignments, coaching and mentoring.	http://careers.csc.com/affiliated/learning.html
Deloitte Touche	Local office development programs, Global Development Program, Global English Program, Professional Certifications (self-learning, compensation for outside study)	http://careers.deloitte.com/culture_globalprograms.aspx#GNPS; http://careers.deloitte.com/culture_localprograms.aspx
EDS/A.T. Kearney	Workplace learning or training courses. EDS University - offers classroom and online courses.	http://www.eds.com/careers/cr_work_training.shtml
First Consulting Group	Professional Compensation and Development System, Professional Development Programs, Knowledge Information Technology Exchange	http://www.fcg.com/careers/other-benefits.asp
Gartner	Orientation, Education Assistance, Performance Review	http://www3.gartner.com/5_about/careers/451a.html#growth
Gedas	Gedas Academy - local training seminars, international courses	http://www.gedas.com/
Hewlett-Packard	Individualized development program via Dedicated Trainee Program or Mentorship using core tutorials, specialized off-site training programs	http://www.jobs.hp.com/content/training/training.asp?Lang=ENen&area=US
IBM	Individual Employee Development Plan set by Manager. Can be focused in any area based on employee's career goals.	http://www-306.ibm.com/employment/us/ibm/edc.shtml
ICF Consulting	Tuition reimbursement, Professional Development Program	http://www.icfconsulting.com/Careers/benefits.asp;http://www.icfconsulting.com/Careers/talent.asp
Keane	Tuition Assistance; Internal training in Productivity	http://www.keane.com/careers/benefits.ph

Keane (cont.)	Management, Software Development Life Cycle, Frameworks, and more; Technical training libraries for employee development at each branch locations	http://www.keane.com/careers/professional_development.php
Kema	Specialized training, project-oriented training, management training, International Program with TSM Business School	http://www.kema.com/corporate/careers/
Kurt Salmon Assoc.	Professional Development opportunities, coaching and mentoring	http://www.kurtsalmon.com/index2.html
Marakon	150 hours of formal training in first 15 months, business school sponsorship	http://www.marakon.com/car_dev_career.html; http://www.marakon.com/car_dev_alternate.html
McKinsey & Company	Formal Learning Programs: Basic Consulting Readiness, Mini-MBA; Core Enhancement/Role-Change Programs: Business Analyst training, Initial leadership workshop, Engagement Management Basics, Engagement Leadership Workshop, Client Leadership Workshop; Programs designed to build specific skills	http://www.mckinsey.com/aboutus/careers/profdevelopment/opportunitiesforlearning/index.asp
Mellon HR (Buck Consultants)	Tuition assistance, educational seminars	http://www.mellon.com/careers/benefits.html
Mercer	A comprehensive formal training program, advisor and mentoring programs, regular case performance feedback, and formal career reviews twice a year.	http://www.mercermc.com/defaultFlash.asp?section=TheFirm
Monitor Group	Informal and formal training, Monitor University	http://www.monitor.com/cgi-bin/iowa/careers/paths.html
Novell (Cambridge Tech.)	Educational Assistance	http://www.novell.com/company/careers/benefits.html
PA Consulting	Formal training given by consultants, online courses	http://www.paconsulting.com/join_pa/career/training/
Roland Berger	Kickoff Event, Seminars, Experience Abroad, Mentorship, MBA/Ph.D, Evaluation	http://www.rolandberger.com/career/en/html/fs3.html
SAP	SAP University - traditional classroom training to online learning.	http://www.sap.com/usa/company/employment/careerdev.asp
Segal	Tuition Reimbursement	http://www.segalco.com/careers/benefits.html#ActuarialStudy
Tata Consultancy Services	10 Off-site training centers offering Induction Training Program, Project Specific training, Continuing Education Programs, Domain Specific Programs	http://www.tcs.com/0_careers/careers_rewards_trainingandeducation.htm
Telcordia	Training in cutting edge technologies, tuition assistance	http://www.telcordia.com/careers/training.html
Towers Perrin	On-the-job Development, Formal Training, Knowledge Exchange, Performance Management	http://careers.towers.com/towers_career/life/ld.asp
T-Systems	Sales Training, Technology Computer-based training, Soft Skills Training	http://www.t-systemsus.com/site/success.html
Unisys	Unisys University - classroom and online training, encourages developmental and cross-functional movement within organization	http://www.unisys.com/about__unisys/careers/growth__and__development/learn__more__about__uu.htm; http://www.unisys.com/about__unisys/careers/growth__and__development/index.htm
Watson Wyatt	Tuition reimbursement, internal and external training programs	http://www.watsonwyatt.com/careers/rewards/benefits.asp
ZS Associates	Orientation, Just in time training, Brown Bag Presentation Series, Skill-Building Courses, Expert Sessions	http://www.zsassociates.com/content.asp?tid=190

Appendix C

Syllabus of Comprehensive Consulting Course*

* From Casebook for the Contemporary Consultant by Thomas Olson, Flemming Poulfelt, et al.

This syllabus is intended for a course that covers the entire field of management consulting. Other courses might concentrate on specialized areas, such as change management. This syllabus is organized into 30 sessions of approximately 80-90 minutes each. It includes a variety of learning experiences from case analysis to speakers and allowed time for workshops where class teams meet and work on their field consulting projects.

Course Title: Dynamics of Management Consulting

This course is designed to provide a broad overview of the management consulting profession, including its industry and competitive dynamics, major practice areas, approaches to implementation, management of consulting firms and the future of consulting. Further emphasis is given to the practice of consulting through a field project and the development of certain high impact skill areas in proposal writing, pricing, data gathering and client presentations.

The course is relevant to those who: 1) are specifically interested in consulting careers, or 2) with job interests that involve staff positions in corporations, or 3) want to become line managers who might one day use consultants.

To accomplish the above, three texts and several assigned readings will be required. Three texts are necessary for the course: The Contemporary Consultant by Flemming Poulfelt, et al;, Flawless Consulting: A Guide to Getting Your Expertise Used (2nd Ed.) by Peter Block, and A Teaching Casebook for The Contemporary Consultant by Thomas Olson, Flemming Poulfelt, et al. The first book provides a wide perspective and depth of "substantive content" about many subjects and issues across the entire field of management consulting; the second book addresses specific skill areas essential for the consultant and his/her toolkit; and the third book provides a number of highly popular teaching cases about consulting firms and client engagements, so as to provide a foundation for applying the knowledge and skills from the first two books.

The learning process will consist of lectures, cases, readings, exercises and a field consulting project. This wide variety of learning methods is intended to convey both the necessary knowledge and practical skill level necessary for building a foundation toward becoming a professional consultant. It is essential that everyone come prepared for class, as it depends heavily upon participation.

Learning Objectives
1) Gain knowledge and understanding of many aspects of the management consulting industry
    and its major practice areas
2) Strengthen one's ability to define key factors relevant to marketing and conducting a successful consulting
    engagement.
3) Improve one's ability to analyze and frame business issues facing a client so as to interest them in purchasing a
    project and assure their later commitment to implementation.
4) Gain exposure to a variety of intervention approaches essential for assuring change in solving a client's problem.
5) Acquire practical skills in certain key areas of consulting.
6) Gain practice in performing a field-consulting project.
7) Assess one's personal strengths and weaknesses against a profile of what it takes to become a successful
consultant.

Appendix C (cont.)
Syllabus of Comprehensive Management Consulting Course

WEEK 1
Session 1 - The Changing Consulting Industry

Session 2 - The Consulting Profession: Types, Skills
     and Values

WEEK 2
Session 3 - Guest Consultant Speaker on Skills

Session 4 - Marketing and Selling of Consulting
     Services

WEEK 3
Session 5 - Proposal Writing Practice and Field
     Project Planning

Session 6 - Practice Area of Information Technology
     Consulting

WEEK 4
Session 7 - Practice Area of Strategy and
     Organization Consulting

Session 8 - Data Gathering Methods and Problem
     Framing

WEEK 5
Session 9 - Data Gathering Methods and Problem
     Framing

Session 10 - Workshop on Field Project

WEEK 6
Session 11 - Practice Area of Marketing Consulting

Session 12 - Managing Engagements

WEEK 7
Session 13 - Practice Area of Operations Consulting

Session 14 - Practice Area of Human Resources
     Consulting

WEEK 8
Session 15 - Consulting to CEOs and Boards

Session 16 - Consulting to Global Clients

WEEK 9
Session 17- Consulting in The Public Sector

Session 18 - Analyzing and Understanding the
     Client's Problem - Paper Due

WEEK 10
Session 19 -Intervention and Change

Session 20 - Merger and Acquisition Integration

WEEK 11
Session 21 - Workshop on Field Project

Session 22 - Consultant Speaker on Change

WEEK 12
Session 23 - The Transformational Change Agent
     and Self-Analysis

Session 24 - Managing Consulting Firms - The
     Growth Problem

WEEK 13
Session 2 - Managing Consulting Firms – The
     Performance Problem

Session 26 - Managing Consulting Firms – The
     Knowledge Problem

WEEK 14
Session 27 - Client Presentations

Session 28 - Client Presentations

WEEK 15
Session 29 - Client Presentations

Session 30 - The Future of Consulting
Last day: Individual paper and Team Field Project
paper due